

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-10 SAM-01 ACDA-05 CU-02 SY-04 USSS-00 /075 W

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7072

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 7773

TOKYO FOR ASST. SECRETARY HABIB

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, KS

SUBJECT: STATE OF ANTI-GOVERNMENT OPPOSITION

REF: A. SEOUL 7688 B SEOUL 7519

BEGIN SUMMARY:. OBSERVERS HERE CONTINUE TO FEEL ROKG WILL
REMAIN IN CONTROL ANTI-GOVT ACTIVITY THROUGHOUT
PRESIDENT FORD'S VISIT AND THAT OPPOSITION AT THIS POINT
DOES NOT WISH TO CHALLENGE THAT CONTROL SERIOUSLY BUT
RATHER TO CONTINUE TO PUBLICIZE THEIR VIEWS. ONCE
PRESIDENT FORD'S VISIT IS OVER HOWEVER MOST EMBASSY
SOURCES BELIEVE OPPOSITION GROUPS MAY AGAIN STEP UP ACTIVITIES
TO TEST ROKG'S RESOLVE. END SUMMARY

1. OPPOSITION NDP CONTINUES TO ABSTAIN FROM PARTICIPATION
IN PARLIAMENTARY BUSINESS THOUGH IT BRIEFLY JOINED
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PLENARY SESSION NOV 19 ON DMZ TUNNEL
ISSUE TO CONDEMN NORTH KOREA. IN DEFIANCE OF POLICE
ORDERS NDP HAS POSTED SIGN IN FRONT OF PARTY HQS CALLING
FOR AN ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE TO REVISE YUSHIN CONSTITUTION
BUT THEY HAVE MADE NO FURTHER ATTEMPT TO MARCH.

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ASSEMBLY VICE SPEAKER YI CHUL SUNG AND KIM YONG SAM'S

SECRETARY BOTH RECONFIRM THAT NDP ACTIVITY WILL BE MUTED THROUGHOUT VISIT.

2. AFTER NOV 25 NDP STILL HAS PLANS TO RESUME EXTRA-PARLIAMNTARY ACTIVITY. HOWEVER, NEGOTIATION HAS RESUMED BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION PARTY LEADERS OVER NDP RETURN TO ASSEMBLY AND NDP CONSTITUTION REVISION BILL. GOVT HAS OFFERED TO RECONSIDER BILL IF NDP STOPS EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY ACTIONS AND RETURNS TO ASSEMBLY. WHILE NDP POSITION IS TO CONTINUE ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE ASSEMBLY SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH DEBATE OVER FORMATION CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION COMMITTEE, PRESSURES APPEAR TO BE BUILDING WITHIN NDP TO TAKE WHAT THEY CAN GET FROM GOVERNMENT AND RETURN TO ASSEMBLY. PRIME MINISTER'S SECRETARY HAN SANG KUK TOLD ACTING POL SECTION CHIEF NOV 20 THAT GOVT DOES NOT EXPECT STRONG OPPOSITION FROM NDP BECAUSE OF SPLIT WITHIN PARTY AND KIM YONG-SAM'S LACK OF FUNDS AND REAL DETERMINATION.

3. STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS CONTINUED IN MUCH THE SAME VOLUME AND INTENSITY THROUGH NOVEMBER 19. MAJOR UNIVERSITIES YONSEI, KOREA, SOGANG, AND NINE COLLEGES OF SEOUL NATIONAL (SNU) ARE NOW CLOSED AND EHWA WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY CLOSED NOV 20 AFTER AN ESTIMATED 4,000 EHWA STUDENTS ISSUED DECLARATION OF CONSCIENCE FOLLOWING PRAYER RALLY AND ATTEMPTED TO BREAK THROUGH POLICE LINES. AS OF NOV 20, AT LEAST 22 SCHOOLS ARE CLOSED OR ON EXTENDED VACATION. SOME OTHERS ARE ONLY TECHNICALLY OPEN HOWEVER AND ARE NOT HOLDING CLASSES. THOUGH DEMONSTRATIONS CONTINUE WHEN SCHOOLS ARE OPEN, ADMINISTRATORS HAVE SHOWN NO RELUCTANCE TO CLOSE THEM WHEN PROTESTS GET OUT OF HAND AND ROKG CAMPUS SURVEILLANCE APPARENTLY HAS NOT LESSENED.

4. STUDENTS AT SEVERAL HIGH SCHOOLS HAVE FOR FIRST TIME JOINED COLLEGE-LEVEL STUDENTS IN ANTI-GOVT PROTEST. SEVERAL HUNDRED STUDENTS AT KYONGGI HIGH SCHOOL ATTEMPTED ABORTIVE RALLY AND THEN ISSUED LEAFLETS ON PRISONERS, CONSTITUTION, ETC. THE CITY OF KWANGJU HAS CLOSED DOWN
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SENIOR CLASSES AT FOUR HIGH SCHOOLS FOLLOWING PROTEST ACTIVITY. EMBASSY SOURCES INDICATE VACATIONING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ARE INVOLVED IN ORGANIZING HIGH SCHOOL PROTEST.

5. CHURCH GROUPS CURRENTLY REMAIN MOST DEMONSTRATIVE AMONG ANTI-GOVT ELEMENTS AND ROKG HAS RESPONDED WITH WARNINGS. ON EVENING OF NOV 14, NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES SECRETARY

GENERAL KIM KWAN SUK ISSUED SHARP STATEMENT DURING ANNIVERSARY MEETING OF YMCA-YWCA. READ BY PRESIDENT OF YWCA, STATEMEN WAS FIRST AUTHORITATIVE PUBLIC PROTESTANT ANSWER TO PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH TO CHRISTIAN BUSINESSMEN (REFTEL B.) HOME MINISTER, DURING NATIONAL ASSEMBLY QUESTIONING ON NOV 18, DECLARED THAT ROK IS PRESAPRED TO DEAL STERNLY WITH FOREIGN MISSIONARIES WHO INTERFERE IN DOMESTIC PROTEST OR CAUSE SOCIAL UNREST. THOUGH ROKG WOULD GIVE "VIOLATORS OF KOREAN HOSPITALITY" CHANCE TO REPENT AND REFORM, MINISTER NOTED THEY COULD EITHER BE DEPORTED OR PUNISHED BY KOREAN LAW. FOREIGN MISSIONARIES ARE INCREASINGLY CONCERNED THAT ROKG WILL END RESTRAINT AFTER PPRESIDENTIAL VISIT.

6. ONE HUNDRED AND ONE LITERARY FIGURES JOINED PROTEST VOICES WITH STATEMENT ON NOV 18, DECLARING THAT FREEDOM OF PRESS, ASSEMBLY, AND ASSOCIAIONS CANNOT BE RESTRICTED AND THAT A NEW CONSITITUTIONAL LAW SHOULD BE ADOPTED. STATEMENT WASREAD BY TWENTY WRITERS AND POETS IN DOWNTOWN SEOUL AND SIGNATORIES INCLUDED PROMINENT INTELLECTUALS.

7. ROKG MANAGEMENT OF SITUATION WITH LOW-KEY, MINIMUM PRESSURE CONTINUED TO BE AIDED BY OPPOSITION GROUPS UNWILLINGNESS TO SERIOUSLY CHALLENGE GOVERNMENT DURING PERIOD OF PRESIDENTIAL VISIT. MAJOR QUESTION ON MOST MINDS REMAINS WHAT PRESIDENT PARK AND OPPOSITION GROUPS WILL DO IN FUTURE. IN NOV 20 CONVERSATION, PRIMEIN'S SECRETARY HAN GAVE ONE POSSIBLE ANSWER. HE INDICATED THAT CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS WITHIN CHRISTIAN GROUPS MIGHT IN OWN INTEREST TRY TO CURB ANTI-GOVT ELEMENTS IN CHURCH -- WHICH HAN SAID WERE CURRENTLY ROKG'S CHIEF CONCERN. BUT IF
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CHRISTIANS, STUDENTS, AND OTHERS DID NOT CALM DOWN HAN ADDED, GOVT WOULD "CRACK-DOWN EVEN TO POINT OF IMPOSING MARTIAL LAW." ROK WAS FACED WITH VERY SERIOUS ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AS WELL AS THREAT FROM NORTH, AND IT COULD NOT BE BOTHERED WITH A LOT OF POLITICAL AGITATORS DISRUPTING THE SITUATION.
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